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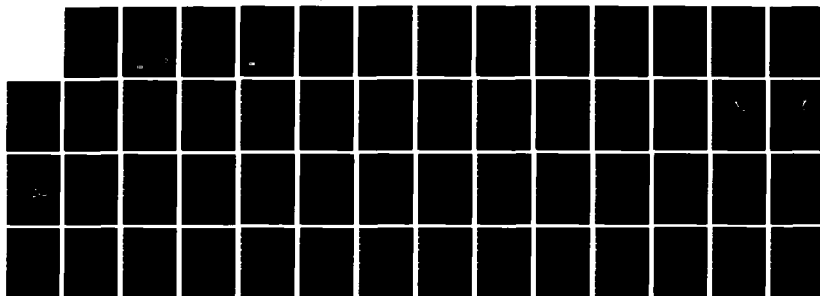
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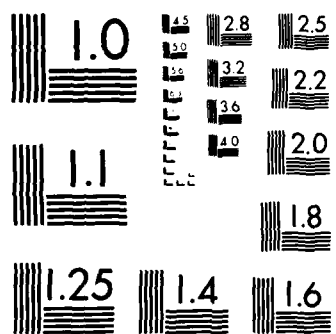
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# THE SEA IS RED: THE SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY AND ITS NAVAL DIMENSION

Kenneth G. Weiss

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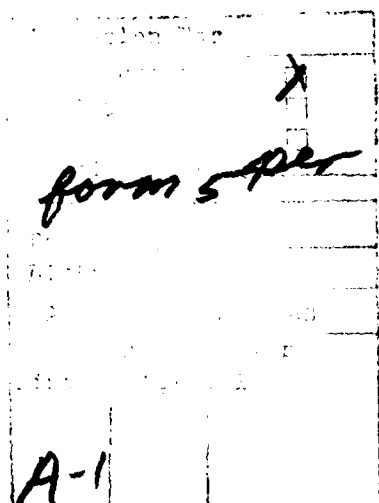
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# THE SEA IS RED: THE SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY AND ITS NAVAL DIMENSION

Kenneth G. Weiss



Naval Planning and Management Division

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## INTRODUCTION\*

Despite recent efforts to improve relations, Moscow and Beijing's competition in Asia has continued with little let-up since their proxy war in Indochina (1978-1979) [1]. As a result, China continues to look to the U.S. for support against the Soviet Union. This stability in U.S., Chinese, and Soviet relations can be explained, in part, by looking at the maritime element of the strategic equation in the Far East.

In the fall of 1982, the Soviets and Chinese resumed talks on improving relations [2]. These talks had been suspended by Beijing after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. At the same time, Sino-American relations, which had been strained since the advent of the Reagan administration, continued to be plagued by disputes over Taiwan, technology, and trade [3].

These developments inspired a great deal of speculation in the West about the prospect for detente, if not rapprochement, between Moscow and Beijing [4]. However, Sino-Soviet relations failed to develop beyond atmospherics. Trade increased [5]. There was a rise in political, cultural, and athletic exchanges [6]. In a dramatic departure, Foreign Minister Huang Hua led a Chinese delegation to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's funeral in Moscow in November 1982 [7]. And Vice Premier Wan Li performed similar services for Brezhnev's successor, Yuri Andropov, in February 1984 [8]. Yet, while Moscow expressed high hopes for improved relations, the Chinese insisted that they expected few substantive results from their discussions with the Soviets [9]. This apparently remains the case despite Beijing's efforts to censor President Reagan's remarks in China critical of the Soviet Union. [10]\*\*

Moreover, ties between Washington and Beijing improved noticeably after Secretary of Defense Weinberger's warm reception in China in September 1983, Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit to the U.S. in January, and President Reagan's trip to China in April 1984 [11]. The administration's decision to relax restrictions on technology transfers to China was a key element in the change [12]. Tensions over Taiwan and trade eased dramatically after the decision [13]. So much so that a Sino-U.S. agreement on the commercial development of China's nuclear power industry was announced during President Reagan's stay in Beijing--a development that no doubt disturbs Moscow [14]. Furthermore, Zhao Ziyang declared in Washington that China's "independent" foreign policy did not

---

\* The author would like to thank Bruce Swanson and David G. Muller, Jr., for introducing him to the mysteries of China's navy.

\*\* Indeed, in an apparent fit of pique over the President's visit and Sino-Vietnamese tensions in Indochina, the Kremlin indefinitely postponed Deputy Premier Ivan Archipov's May visit to Beijing the day before it was scheduled to begin.



imply "equidistance" between the two superpowers [15]. In other words, China would continue to look to the U.S. rather than the Soviet Union. And in declaring that a "comprehensive strategic partnership" with the U.S. was impossible, Zhao hinted that a less formal security relationship was in the cards [16].\*

How do we account for the relative lack of change in relations among the U.S., China, and the Soviet Union--despite significant leadership changes in all three countries since 1979? The reason is simple: strategic realities, as the Chinese like to put it, make a dramatic transformation in the triangular equation difficult, if not necessarily inconceivable. And as in the past, recent Sino-Soviet negotiations have been accompanied by a competition for political and military advantage in Asia. This rivalry has spread to the seas bordering China. It is from this maritime perspective that this paper will view current dynamics in the Sino-Soviet conflict.

Before looking at the naval element in the Sino-Soviet rivalry, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the strategic reality. And after we have looked at the maritime aspect of the strategic equation, we can look at the U.S. Navy's role in the Sino-Soviet rivalry.

---

\* This was further indicated by the announcement during Reagan's trip that Defense Minister Zhang Aiping would visit the U.S. in June.

## SECTION 1

### THE STRATEGIC REALITY

The Sino-Soviet dispute was born in ideological controversy but has been sustained by nationalism. Since World War II, the Soviet Union has sought to secure its borders by fostering "friendly regimes" in Eastern Europe, Mongolia, China, North Korea, and most recently Afghanistan. To the Soviets, a friendly regime is generally one that Moscow dominates through a ruling Communist Party. The Brezhnev Doctrine, in turn, justifies Soviet efforts to sustain a "friendly" Communist Party in power. The Chinese, on the other hand, were attracted to communism as a guide to throwing off foreign domination [17]. Thus, even before the Chinese Communist Party came to power in 1949, its relations with the Soviet Union were strained [18]. Indeed, it was remarkable that Moscow and Beijing were able to sustain a close relationship as long as they did in the 1950s. Since then Sino-Soviet relations have been marked by Moscow's efforts to encircle and intimidate China into settling their differences on Soviet terms [19]. Yet, the Soviets have never dared to apply the Brezhnev Doctrine to China because their fear of the Chinese verges on the irrational\* and because they believe the U.S. would exploit a Sino-Soviet conflict. Nevertheless, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan indicated that the restoration of a friendly regime in Beijing--by one means or another--remains a long-term Soviet goal.\*\* In the short term, Moscow would like to "persuade" the Chinese to accept a Soviet version of security in the Far East.

As a result, there is an enormous number of Soviet military forces on the China border (see table 1). Of the total Soviet ground forces

---

\* The Kremlin has good reason to be cautious, since military action against China would incur serious military and political risks. Yet, the Soviets claim to fear military invasion from China. For example, when it was pointed out to a Soviet military officer that Chinese military capabilities were limited, he replied, "Yes, but they all know karate" [20]. Although a more sophisticated view of the Chinese prevails among those Soviets who study China, there is little evidence that their view is shared by the Soviet leadership or the Soviet populace at large [21].

\*\* According to one study, "Soviet elites generally believe that they have an inherent right to influence events on their own border.... They perceive the situation in Afghanistan as a dangerous source of instability. Few, if any Soviets, either believe or are particularly concerned about whether or not they were invited in. They perceive themselves as acting as a great power ought to act by curbing dangerous instability where they can" [22]. Few Soviets would regard the Sino-Soviet border as a stable one. As one Soviet asked rhetorically, "What would you [the U.S.] do if you had one billion hostile Mexicans on your border?" [23].

consisting of approximately 191 divisions and about two million men, about a quarter, 52 divisions or 500,000 men, are deployed on or near the Sino-Soviet border. Similar proportions apply to Soviet air, naval, and missile units in Asia. They have also modernized their weapons in the region to include TU-22M Backfire bombers, SS-20 missiles, and Kiev-class carriers [24].

TABLE 1

SOVIET FORCES IN THE FAR EAST

GROUND FORCES

Total 52 divisions (470,000 troops)  
Deployment by Military Districts (MD):  
Far Eastern MD - 25 divisions  
Transbaikal MD - 10 divisions  
Siberian MD - 5 divisions  
Central Asian MD - 7 divisions  
Mongolia - 5 divisions

Soviet divisions have three categories of combat readiness: Category 1, 75-100% strength; Category 2, 50-75% strength; Category 3, below 50% strength. Approximately 35% of the divisions in the Far East are in Category 1 or 2

AIR FORCES

Total 2,000 combat aircraft  
440 - bombers  
1,510 - tactical fighters  
150 - patrol aircraft

NAVAL FORCES

Total 820 - ships  
89 - major surface combatants  
225 - minor surface combatants  
135 - submarines (65 nuclear powered including 28 SSBNs)  
400 - combat aircraft

---

Sources: The Military Balance, 1983-1984, International Institute for Strategic Studies: London, 1983, 14-18; Defense of Japan, 1983, Defense Agency: Tokyo, 1983, 30-32; Soviet Military Power, 1983, U.S. Department of Defense: Washington, D.C., 1983, 51-55.

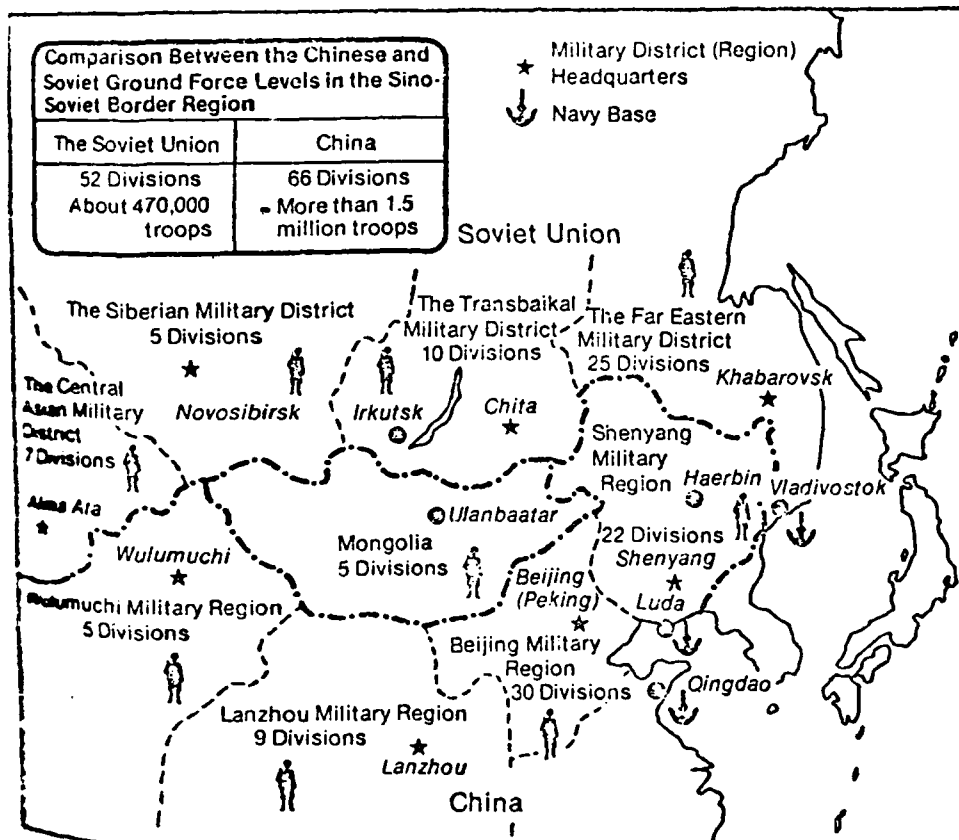


FIG. 1: DEPLOYMENT AND DISPOSITION OF TROOPS  
ALONG THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

To underline the importance the Kremlin attaches to the Far Eastern front, Moscow apparently created a Theater of Military Operations (TVD) in that region in late 1978 or early 1979. According to Japanese reports, the Far Eastern, Transbaikal, and Siberian (and perhaps Central Asian) Military Districts were subordinated to that headquarters. Pravda hinted in December 1978 that before becoming Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Ground Forces, General V. I. Petrov was appointed the first head of this command arrangement--which substantially improved Moscow's command and control capabilities in the Far East in wartime.

In that event, the Soviets have demonstrated in the Ussuri crisis in 1969 and the Sino-Vietnamese Border War in 1979 that they could rapidly reinforce (and flesh out) their Category 2 and 3 divisions in the region by moving forces from other parts of the country. A large proportion of these troops, supplies, and weapons would move along the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Although the railway runs close to the Chinese border for long stretches, it is protected by substantial numbers of troops, and its vulnerability will be further reduced by the completion of the Baikal-Amur Mainline Railroad in the mid-1980s. The Soviets can also move a sizeable number of troops by air with their IL-76, AN-22, and AN-12 transport aircraft, as they did in 1969 and 1979. Moreover, the production and deployment of the new Condor heavy-lift transport will give the Soviets the capability to quickly move major weapons systems like the SS-20 missile launcher from west to east and vice versa [26].

Soviet forces would be capable of taking a variety of actions against China, ranging from "punishment" to full-scale invasion. Their forces are substantially superior to the Chinese in armor, mechanized forces, aircraft, air defense, and tactical and strategic nuclear weapons [27]. Besides a ground attack, the Soviets could also try to humiliate Beijing by using their air-mobile brigades to make a quick strike (perhaps supported by an air attack) against a strategic target like Chinese nuclear facilities [28]. The Soviet air force could also disrupt the Chinese economy by attacking industrial targets in Manchuria [29]. And the Soviet Navy is also capable of supporting a variety of military actions against China. What role, if any, Vietnamese forces might play against China is difficult to determine. Since 1979, both China and Vietnam have deployed forces of approximately 300,000 men on opposite sides of the misnamed Friendship Pass [30]. So Hanoi is bound to tie down some Chinese troops in a war, and Soviet support for a Vietnamese attack on the Paracels could not be ruled out (see figure 2).

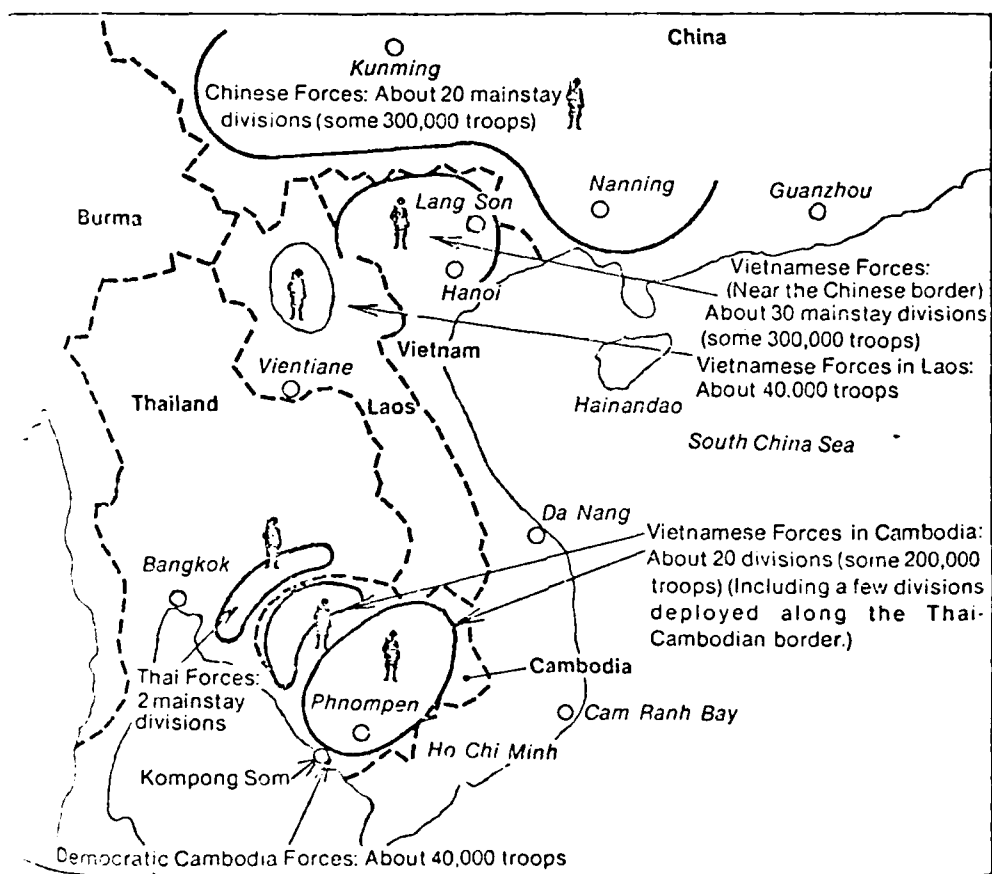


FIG. 2: MILITARY POSTURE IN INDOCHINA

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

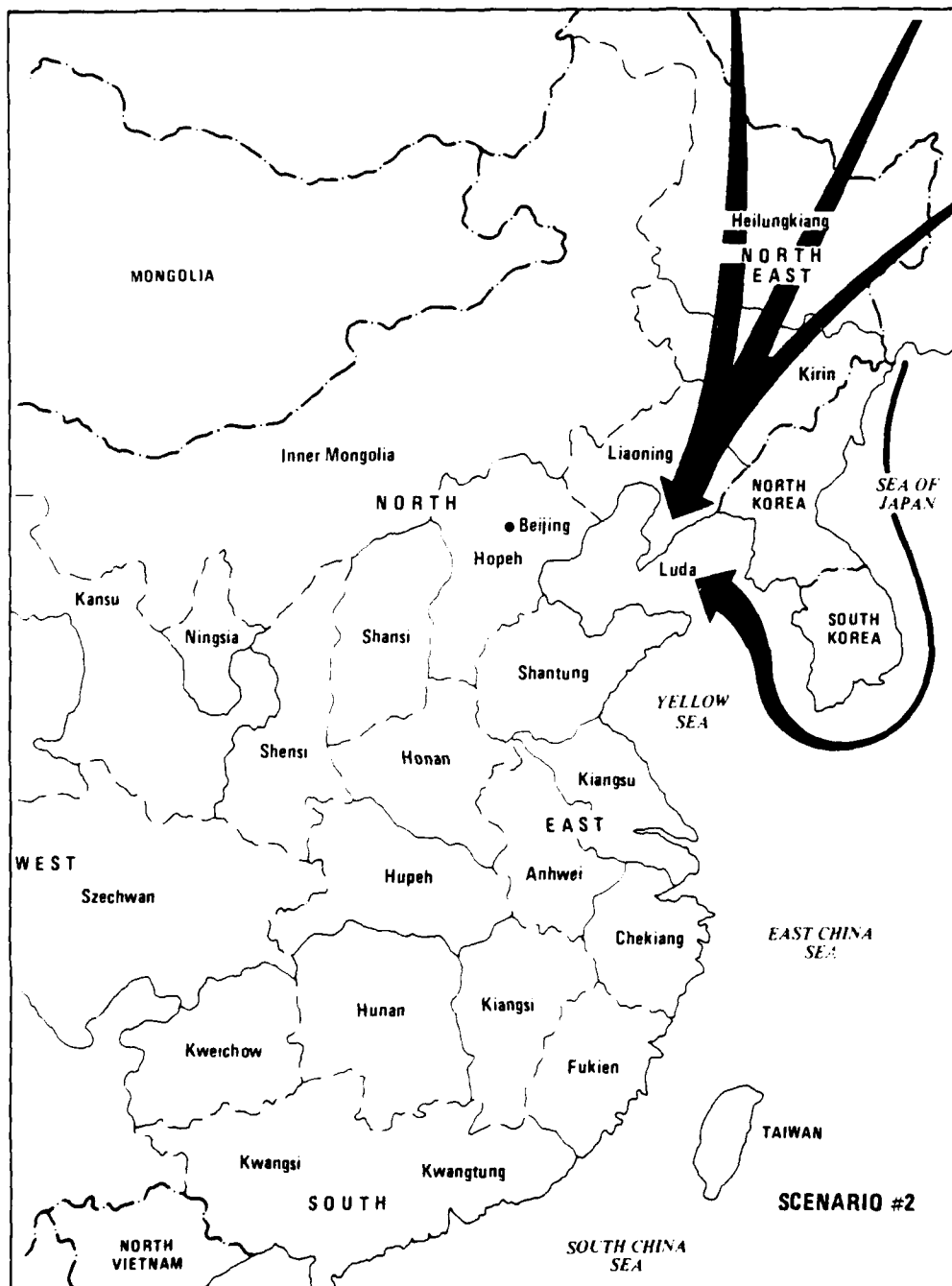


FIG. 10: SCENARIO #2: ILLUSTRATION OF A POSSIBLE GROUND AND SEA ASSAULT ON CHINA

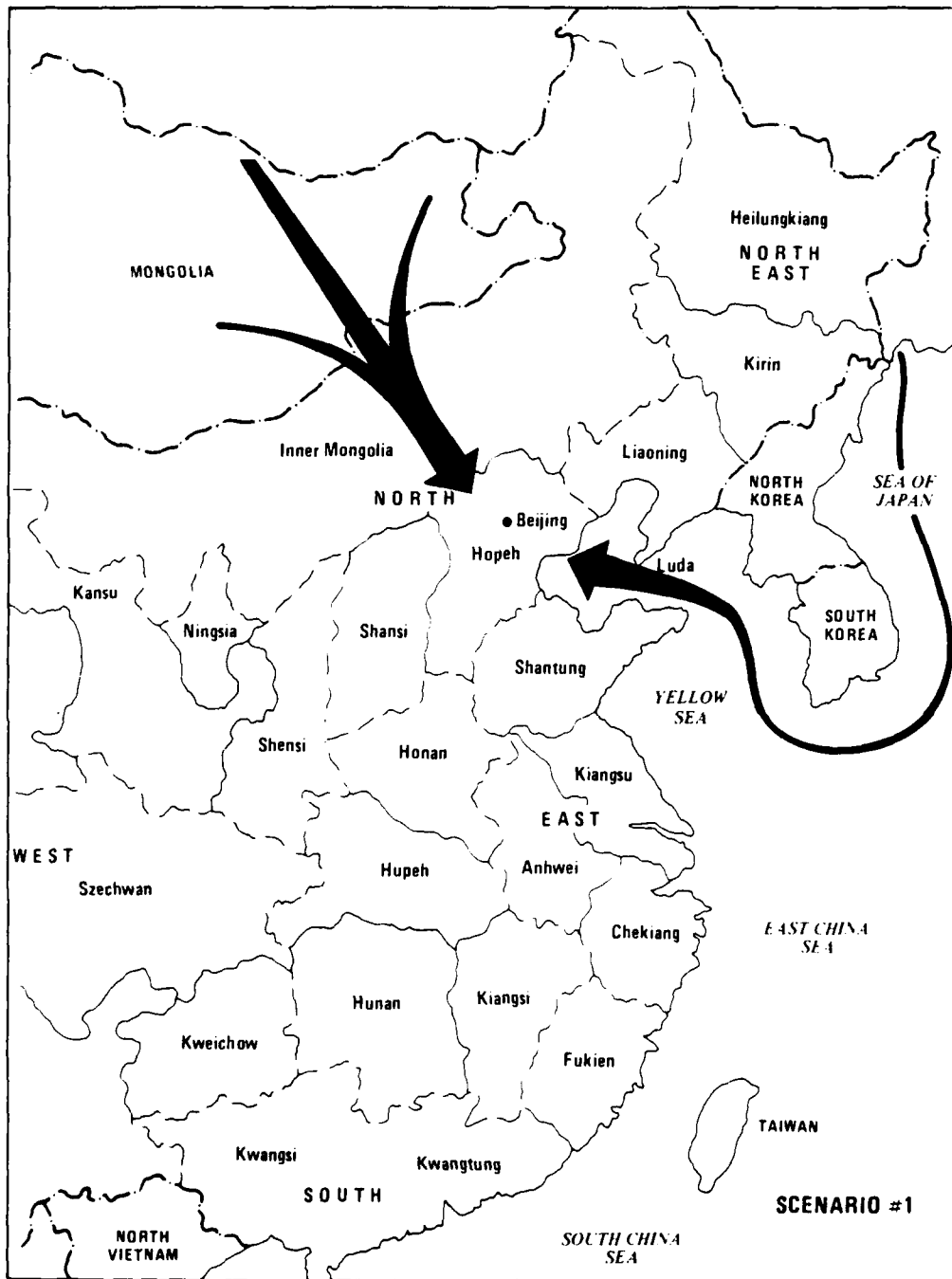


FIG. 9: SCENARIO #1: ILLUSTRATION OF A POSSIBLE SOVIET GROUND AND SEA ASSAULT ON CHINA



weapons. This indicates that submarines might be used to land small groups of soldiers to disrupt the enemy's rear [45].

China's efforts to update its submarine force have met with mixed results. A new version of the Romeo, the Ming-class SS, has yet to go into serial production. The development of the Han SSN and the Xia SSBN was plagued with problems. Until recently, the Chinese have long had a Golf SSB and then a Xia SSBN without a useable SLBM [46].

Since its establishment, the PLAN has been largely managed and organized like its imperial predecessor in the 18th and 19th centuries. For example, the Communists adopted a proposal first made in 1880 by organizing the navy in three fleets: the North Sea Fleet based at Qingdao, the East Sea Fleet at Shanghai, and the South Sea Fleet at Zhanjiang [23]. As in the days of the Qing dynasty, the navy is rather decentralized. There is little intermingling of ships and personnel among the fleets. Even the programs of the navy's various schools and academies have lacked coherence and standardization. Moreover, the navy, like the army, is organized into a main force and regional forces similar to the Qing dynasty's main force Banner armies and the regional army of the Green Standard. As a result, regional commanders have enjoyed a great deal of autonomy [47].

The imperial and Communist navies are similar in structure and organization because they have had a similar mission--coastal defense. That mission was a natural one for a land-oriented Chinese leadership that achieved victory in 1949 through guerrilla warfare. It was also compatible with the Soviets' "Young School" of naval strategy that influenced the Chinese Navy in the days of Sino-Soviet solidarity. The Young School theorized that a "peace-loving" socialist country only needed a defensive navy deployed in coastal waters. Thus, the Chinese Navy was structured for submarines, fast patrol boats, shore-based aircraft, missiles, and artillery. The Chinese called the doctrine "guerrilla warfare at sea." However, the Soviet Navy abandoned the teachings of the Young School long ago, and the growth of the Soviet Pacific fleet has forced the Chinese to reconsider guerrilla warfare at sea [48].

#### The Soviet Naval Threat

There are indications that Beijing's perceptions of the Soviet naval threat mirror China's experiences with Western and Japanese naval power in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although the Chinese seem to think that the Soviet's main effort would be on the ground, the Soviet Navy might play an important role in a Sino-Soviet war. A Soviet attack on Xinjiang probably would not be followed up by an amphibious landing because the province is so remote from the sea. However, a Soviet attack from Mongolia might be accompanied by an amphibious landing at Tianjin in the Gulf of Bohai to capture Beijing in a pincer movement (see figures 9 through 11). If the Soviets invaded Manchuria, they might also land on the Liaodong Peninsula in an effort to sever the

Despite these impressive numbers, the Chinese Navy is mainly a coastal defense force. Indeed, the British noted during their port visit to Shanghai in 1980 that the decks of the warships in the harbor were painted yellow--a protective coloring more suited for operations along the China coast than on the open sea. Moreover, the navy's force is still largely composed of small coastal defense craft with poor sea-keeping qualities. Furthermore, Chinese ships are generally based on Soviet designs of the 1940s and 1950s. However, Chinese destroyers and frigates armed with SS-N-2s and conventional weapons have a good anti-surface warfare capability. But they are highly vulnerable to enemy submarines and aircraft because they lack modern sensors and weapons. They have little in the way of electronic warfare (EW) or electronic countermeasures (ECM) and, apparently, have yet to deploy an operational SAM system. Indeed, the Luda destroyer does not have a combat information center (CIC), so orders and decisions must come from the bridge. As a result, Chinese surface ships are not likely to operate beyond this land-based air cover in wartime [43].

The PLA naval air force itself is largely composed of obsolete aircraft. Like the surface force, its large numbers prove a fair threat to surface warships, but it is deficient in antisubmarine and antiair warfare capabilities. The bombs and torpedoes of the IL-28 Beagle provide the main threat to Soviet warships, but the Chinese can also use Mig-19 and Mig-21 fighters and the more capable TU-16 bomber. However, China's lack of sophisticated airborne sensors and seaborne helicopters would make it difficult for the Chinese to detect Soviet submarines in wartime and kill them when detected. The navy's air defense is handicapped by a lack of all-weather fighters, air-to-air missiles, and airborne and shipborne controlled intercept radars. Chinese aircraft also lack an aerial refuelling capability. Thus, their combat radius is limited to 150 nautical miles offshore [44].

The Chinese have a potent submarine force. Their Romeos and Whiskeys have the range and endurance to operate anywhere in the Pacific. However, they are slow and noisy when they snorkel. On long-range patrols, they would be highly vulnerable to the Soviet Navy's more sophisticated ASW capability. In turn, they lack the modern sensors and weapons to conduct effective operations against enemy submarines. Thus, in wartime, they are likely to operate in the China Sea, where the shallow waters would offset their disadvantage in speed and where the coastal crevices would make their detection more difficult. (Indeed, the fact that the Soviet's new Kilo-class diesel submarines are built and deployed so far only in the Far East indicates that they may be designed to ferret out Chinese submarines hiding along the continental shelf--an area where Soviet SSNs would be at a disadvantage.) They would then wait in "wolf packs" for enemy ships off various choke points. Chinese planning may also require submarine support for PLA ground operations. The British noted on their port visit to Shanghai that Chinese submarines were equipped with storage areas for infantry

## SECTION 2

### SINO-SOVIET NAVAL RIVALRY

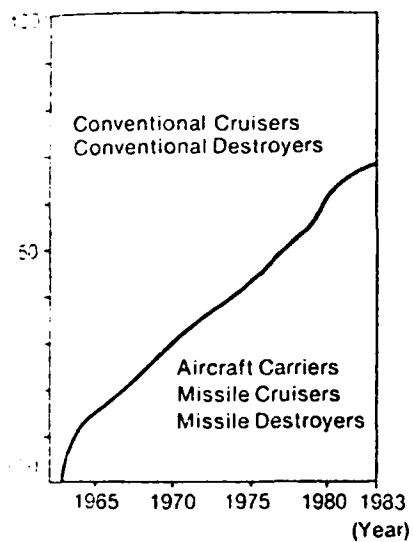
In this section, we will first look at the Sino-Soviet naval balance, China's view of the Soviet naval threat, Soviet naval diplomacy, and China's response.

#### The Naval Balance

The Pacific Ocean fleet, the largest of the Soviet Navy's four fleets, is more powerful than the entire Chinese Navy. Soviet naval forces in the Pacific have grown steadily from the mid-1960s, from about 50 principal surface combatants to almost 90 today. The addition to the fleet of such vessels as Kiev-class carriers, Kara-class missile cruisers, and Krivak-class missile destroyers also represents a significant qualitative increase in Soviet naval capabilities in the Pacific. This quantitative and qualitative improvement can also be seen in subsurface capabilities in the addition to the fleet of nuclear-powered submarines like the Delta III-class SSBN, the Victor III-class SSN, and the new class of diesel-electric Kilo conventional-attack submarines. The jump in Soviet warship strength in the region has been matched by an increase in the striking power of Soviet naval aviation. Since the mid-1960s, the number of Soviet naval aircraft has increased over 50 percent to a current force of about 440 aircraft. Some 30 naval long-range Backfire B aircraft, deployed to the Far East since 1980--in addition to the Air Force Backfires in the area--can strike anywhere in China and in much of the Pacific, as well. Moreover, an 8,000-man division based near Vladivostok constitutes the largest contingent of naval infantry in the Soviet Navy. As one analyst puts it, the Pacific fleet is "far superior (to the Chinese Navy) in long-range submarines; major surface combatants; fleet support ships; ocean going missile-armed air, surface, and sub-surface platforms; and fixed-wing ASW aircraft" [41].

Even so, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is not a negligible force. In terms of numbers, it ranks second only to the Soviet Navy. It boasts the third largest submarine force. These 100 submarines, mainly Romeos and Whiskeys, form the backbone of the Chinese Navy. Although the submarines are of an old design, they are well suited to operations in the shallow waters along the China coast. The Chinese have also developed the Han-class SSN and the Xia-class SSBN. The recent successful testing of an SLBM in their one Golf-class SSB and the projected deployment of six Xia-class SSBNs will add the final leg to the Chinese triad of land- and sea-based nuclear missiles and nuclear-armed bombers. At any one time, the Chinese can also deploy some 200 missile-equipped ships mounting some 500 SS-N-2s. The navy has also developed a significant underway replenishment capability, effectively extending the range and endurance of its largest surface warships--the Luda-class destroyers and various frigate classes--and the naval air component has a large number of land-based aircraft--some 800 planes [42].

(1) Missile Equipment for Major Surface Combat Vessels



(2) Nuclearization of Submarines

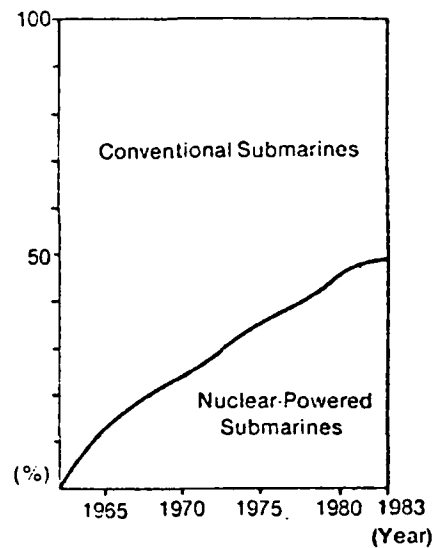


FIG. 8: MODERNIZATION STAGES OF SOVIET FAR EASTERN VESSELS

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

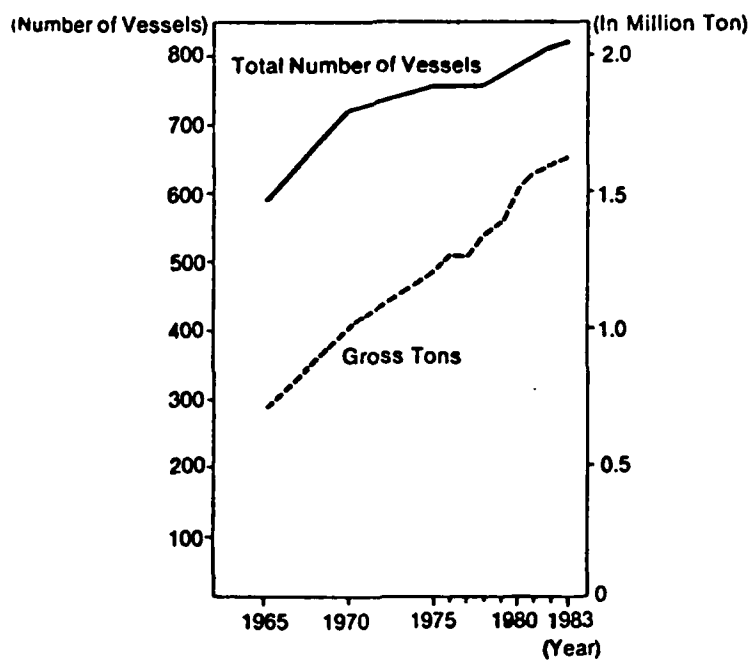


FIG. 7: CHANGES IN SOVIET NAVAL STRENGTH  
IN THE FAR EAST

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

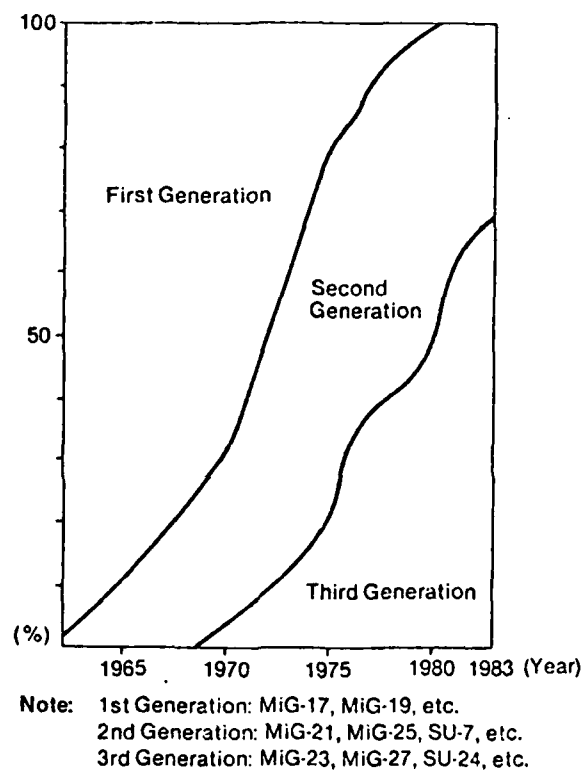


FIG. 6: MODERNIZATION STAGES OF SOVIET FAR EASTERN FIGHTERS

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

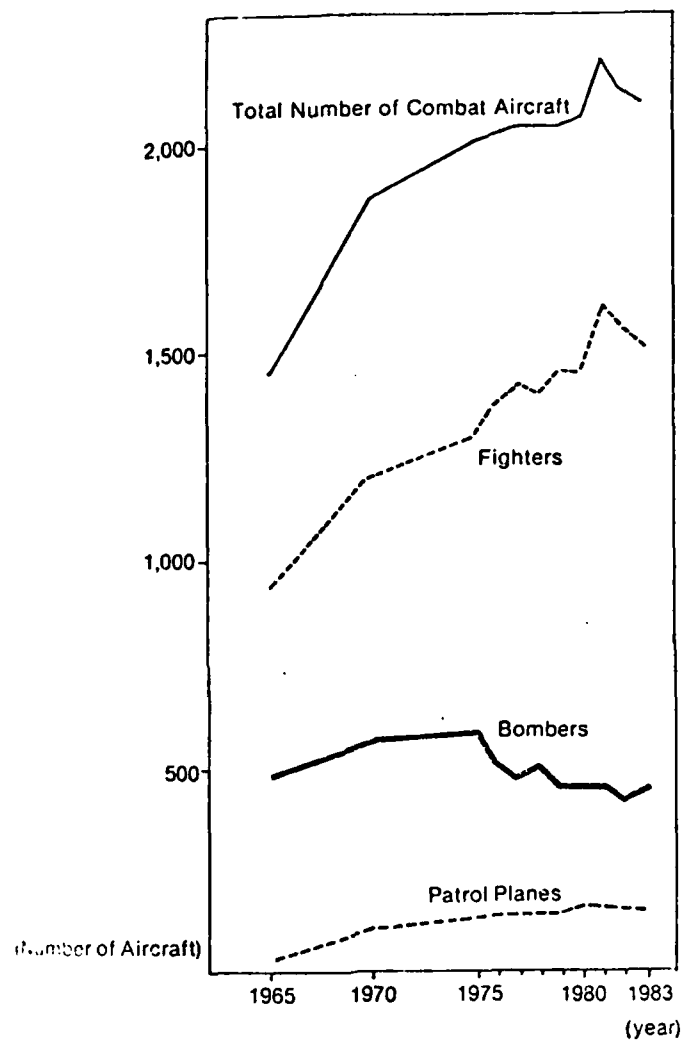


FIG. 5: CHANGES IN SOVIET AIR FORCE STRENGTH

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

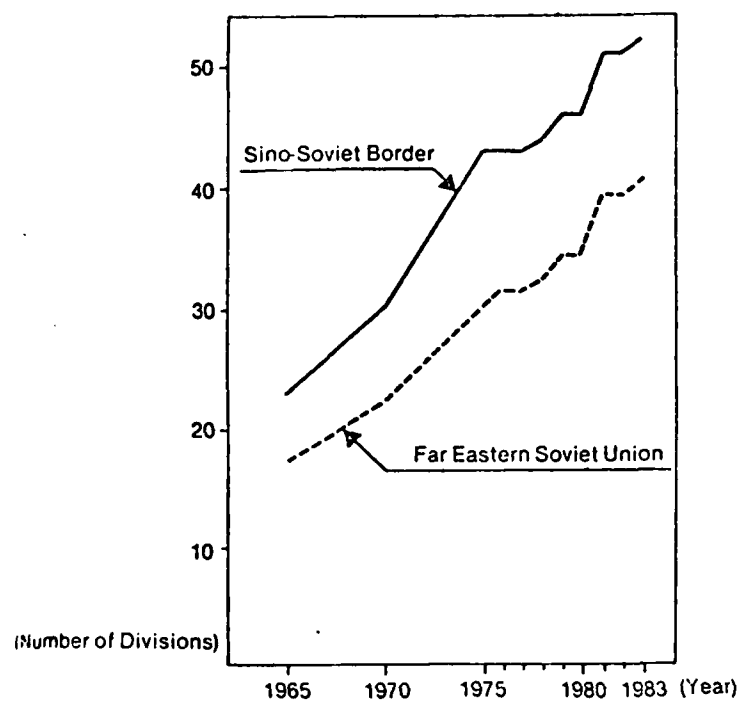


FIG. 4: CHANGES IN NUMBER OF SOVIET FAR EASTERN DIVISIONS

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983



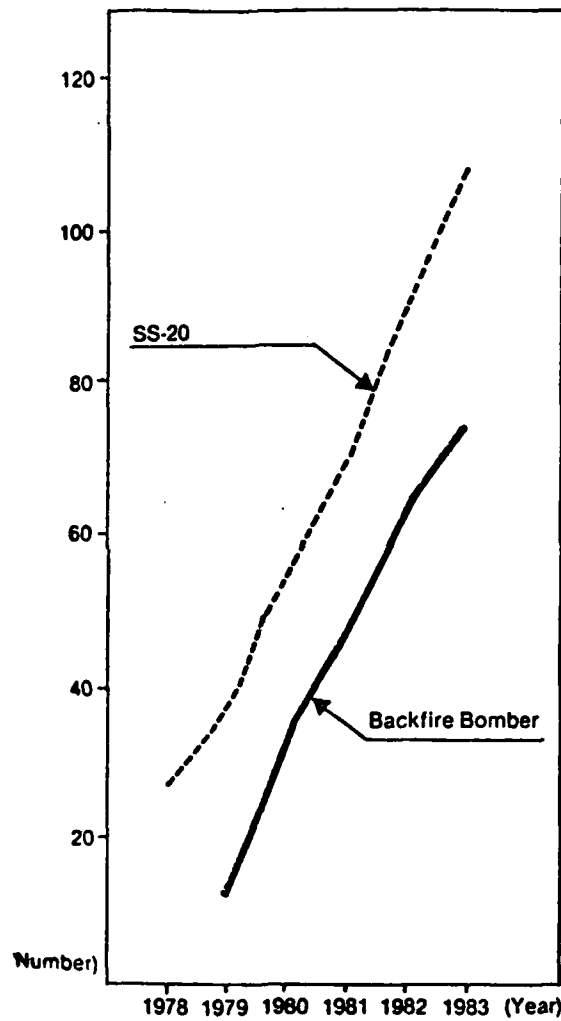


FIG. 3: CHANGES IN SOVIET FAR EASTERN DEPLOYMENT OF INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Source: Defense of Japan, 1983

The U.S. has gained greatly from the Sino-Soviet dispute. The benefits are obvious: U.S. forces in the Pacific are no longer tied down by a hostile China, and as we have seen, a significant number of Soviet forces are deployed against China instead of the West [35]. Moreover, Chinese forces are also countering Hanoi along the Sino-Vietnam border, and Chinese arms are helping the guerrillas against the Soviets in Afghanistan and against the Vietnamese in Kampuchea [36].

This strategic reality then makes fundamental changes in the triangular equation difficult, if not impossible. Neither China nor the U.S. can push bilateral differences to the breaking point for fear of giving the Soviet Union additional leverage in their on-going rivalries. Nor can the Soviets seek rapprochement or even detente with China (or with the U.S.) without changing their policies and behavior that gives rise to that rivalry. That is why the Chinese insist the Soviets meet their demands regarding the Sino-Soviet border and Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Kampuchea. What the Chinese are asking for is nothing less than the elimination of the Soviet threat to China's security.

Would the Chinese settle for a good deal less? The Chinese have hinted that progress in these areas would help ease Sino-Soviet tensions, but normalization would require a comprehensive settlement [37]. The reason for this is simple: If the Chinese settle for less than a comprehensive agreement, they might alienate the U.S., drive Japan into feverish rearmament, undermine their commitments to ASEAN and Pakistan, and yet fail to eliminate the Soviet threat to China's security [36]. Moreover, the Soviets seem reluctant to ease their pressure on China because they apparently believe that their military policies have helped bring China to the bargaining table and because they would have to abandon extensive commitments in Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Vietnam from which they derive real political and military benefits. Indeed, since 1979, the Soviets have increased the number of divisions on China's border from 44 to 52, and the number of SS-20s in the Far East from less than 40 to more than 100 [39]. The VTOL carrier Minsk has been joined by its sister ship, the Novorossiysk, and the number of Backfire bombers in the region has increased to 80 (see figures 3 through 8) [40].

We will now turn to a discussion of the naval dimension of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. In doing so, we will see how it reflects and reinforces the larger strategic dimension that lends considerable stability to the triangular equation.

TABLE 2

THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

GROUND FORCES

Total 3.15 million troops in 11 Military Regions (MR)  
135 - main force divisions  
97 - regional force divisions

Deployment along the northern border:

Shenyang MR-22 divisions  
Beijing MR-30 divisions  
Lanzhou MR-9 divisions  
Urumqi MR-5 divisions

AIR FORCES

Total 5,300 combat aircraft  
Bombers:  
120 - H-6 (IL-28)  
550 - H-5 (TU-16)  
Fighters:  
500 - ground attack aircraft (J-4 and Q-5s)  
4,000 - interceptors (300 J-5 (Mig-17), 3,000 J-6 (Mig-19),  
300 - J-7 (Mig-21), 30 J-8 (Mig-23)

NAVAL FORCES

Total 1,965 vessels  
44 - major surface combatants  
882 - minor surface combatants  
104 - attack submarines (SS)  
1 - ballistic missile submarine (SSB)  
1 - nuclear-powered ballistic submarine (SSBN)  
2 - nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN)  
800 - naval combat aircraft (including Chinese designated  
TU-16 and IL-28 bombers and Mig-17, -19, and  
-21 fighters)  
Deployment: North Sea Fleet - 500 vessels;  
East Sea Fleet - 750 vessels;  
South Sea Fleet - 600 vessels

Although impressive in numbers, PLA's equipment--tanks, aircraft, ships, etc.--is vintage 1950s with some modifications.

Sources: The Military Balance 1983-1984, International Institute for Strategic Studies: London, 1983, 82-85; Defense of Japan, 1983, Defense Agency: Tokyo, 1983, 40-41; Jane's Fighting Ships, 1983-1984, Jane's Publishing Company Ltd. London 1983, 91-107

The Chinese are well aware of the Soviets' desire for a subservient government in Beijing.\* They also know that, so far, the Soviets have only invaded socialist countries. The Chinese fear that the Kremlin might take limited action to shake the Zhongnanhai\*\* or launch a full-scale invasion to install a new government in Beijing--if Moscow thought a short war were possible [32].

If the Soviets invaded, the Chinese claim that they would counter-attack, but their military dispositions tell a different story. Chinese main force divisions are deployed away from the border and are concentrated in an arc around Beijing and the northeast, leaving the west and northwest lightly defended (see figure 1). These deployments suggest that the Chinese would absorb the Soviet blow, trading space for time and conducting guerrilla operations in the enemy rear. The Zhongnanhai is confident that the Soviets would eventually drown in a sea of Chinese. But the government's concern to protect Beijing indicates its fear that the regime might not survive the fall of the capital. The government that loses Beijing generally loses the "mandate of heaven" [33].

Thus, the Chinese have become interested in improving their ability to deter or repel an attack. Since the bloody clashes along the Sino-Soviet border in 1969, the Zhongnanhai has sought to deter a Soviet invasion and counter Soviet intimidation by improving its relations with the United States. The Chinese have also begun to seek deterrence by improving the PLA's ability to repel a Soviet attack (see table 2). Guerrilla warfare and strategic weaponry no longer seem to be enough, they have begun to recognize that they may have to fight at various levels of military force, that they need to develop tactical nuclear weapons, and that they must improve the PLA's conventional capabilities. To that end, the PLA has begun to emphasize "combined arms" training to improve coordination of infantry, armor, and aircraft. (The PLA's lackluster performance in the Sino-Vietnamese Border War has spurred this development.) To improve the PLA's equipment, the Chinese are seeking Western technology and are still considering some arms purchases abroad [34].

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\* As Huan Xiang, director of the PRC Institute of International Affairs, puts it: "It is part of the Russian psychology that they consider themselves the father while the others should be the sons. Unless the Russians change this attitude, there will not be any socialist family. Instead, a serious antagonism of interests will remain because the Soviet Union wants to gain control over other states which, however, have no desire to be controlled" [31].

\*\* The leadership compound in Beijing.

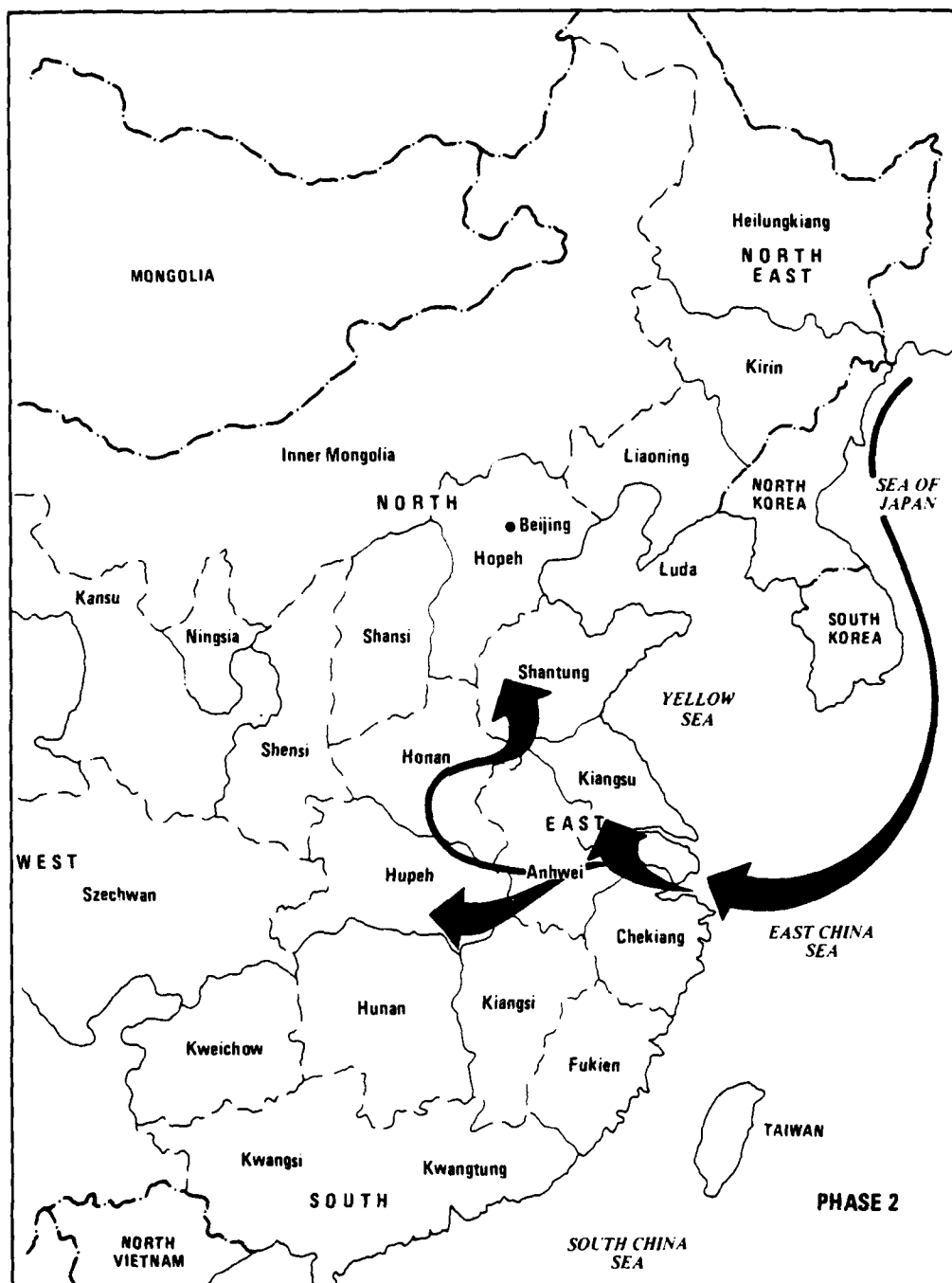


FIG. 11: ILLUSTRATION OF A POSSIBLE SECOND PHASE OF A SOVIET GROUND AND SEA ASSAULT ON CHINA

industrially important northeast from the rest of China. Interestingly, the Chinese seem to believe that the Soviets would follow up any success in northern China by seizing the Yangtze River basin. The Soviets would attempt to land at Shanghai and drive up the Yangtze Valley and capture its strategic farming regions. All of these scenarios have historical precedents: the British landing at Tianjin in the Arrow War of 1858-1860, the Japanese seizure of the Liaodong Peninsula in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, and especially, Japanese operations in the Sino-Japanese War of 1931-1945 [49].

Conceivably, a Soviet amphibious assault would be preceded by an aerial bombardment, then a landing by naval infantry, perhaps supplemented by paratroops, immediately followed by a motorized infantry division. The Chinese would probably counterattack while the PLAN would no doubt concentrate on cutting off the SLOCs to the Soviet beachhead. The Chinese have hinted that the navy would set up four lines of resistance: (1) submarines operating 150-200 miles out to sea; (2) naval aviation, 100-150 miles; (3) surface ships, 50-100 miles; and (4) coastal artillery and missiles. (Presumably, the Chinese would also lay a protective barrier of mines since they have a considerable mining capability.) This strategy is similar to the one advocated by the Young School and somewhat similar to Chinese operations in 1894-1895 [50].

Whether Moscow has the ability to undertake such landings or actions is debatable. Some argue that the Soviet Navy probably could mount a successful assault and inflict disproportionate losses on the Chinese Navy. But Soviet losses on the beach and in the sea would be prohibitively high. If the Soviets did undertake naval operations against China proper, they would be more likely to make nuisance raids against Chinese ports or seize a Chinese coastal position bypassed in a Soviet ground offensive [51].

On the other hand, the massive Soviet attack in Manchuria in 1945 so surprised the Japanese army, according to the commander of the operation, Marshal A. Vasilevsky, that hazardous operations like amphibious landings along the Korean coast and paratroops behind the Japanese lines at Harbin, the Liaodong peninsula, and so forth, were successful. Thus, a future Soviet ground offensive could be combined with deep penetration air strikes against the Chinese air force and naval air force, naval bases, and especially submarine bases. As in 1945, the Soviets could accompany this effort by mining Chinese naval bases. The confusion caused by the ground offensive, coupled with the damage inflicted on Chinese defenses against sea attack, might make a major amphibious landing (and paratroop) possible. The Liaodong peninsula is a likely candidate for such an operation because its seizure could help ease any Soviet logistic problems in occupying Manchuria [52].

Whatever the case, the Kremlin has not been above encouraging Chinese fears of such military moves in crisis situations. As we will see, Soviet activity in these crises indicates that, at the very least, the Soviet Navy would be deployed to isolate China from the sea, protect

Soviet SLOCs in the Far East, engage the Chinese Navy, and warn the U.S. against intervention [53].

### Soviet Naval Diplomacy

Since 1969, the Kremlin and the Zhongnanhai have moved away from direct confrontations to proxy conflicts. In that year, bloody clashes along the Ussuri River in March escalated to the brink of conflict in August. Timely concessions by the Chinese (and the Nixon administration's support for China) probably prevented a Soviet attack. Since then, Moscow and Beijing have confined their competition to the periphery, while maintaining large forces along their borders. Politically, each nation has sought to encircle the other. The Soviets have gained the support of India, Vietnam, and occupied Afghanistan. The Chinese have looked to the U.S., Japan, Pakistan, ASEAN, and NATO, among others. Indeed, the Sino-Vietnamese Border War of 1979 was an outgrowth of intense Soviet and Chinese efforts to gain or deny support to each other. Militarily, the Soviets have used the buildup and modernization of their armed forces in the Far East to pressure the Chinese, while the Chinese have maintained large forces in a determined effort to resist such pressure [54].

Naval forces are a key component in this psychological warfare. The Soviet Pacific fleet is largely designed to protect the navy's SSBN force in the bastion formed by the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk, and secondarily to interdict U.S. and Japanese sea lines of communications (SLOCs) in the Pacific in wartime. Even so, navies are flexible instruments of power--designed for one purpose, often used for another. The Soviets have used their naval forces to pressure the Chinese by increasing their sense of isolation and encirclement. Their navy has been active in the seas near China since 1968. In that year, for example, Soviet ships out of Vladivostok visited Japan, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Iraq, South Yemen, and Somalia. Ten years later in 1978, 140 Soviet warships traversed the Tsushima Straits. By 1982, this figure had increased to 165 [55].

Moreover, in 1978, Moscow took advantage of tensions between China and Vietnam over Kampuchea to draw Hanoi into a military alliance. As a result of the ensuing border war between Beijing and Hanoi in early 1979 over Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, the Soviets gained access to naval and air force facilities at Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and the Cambodian port of Kampong Saom--the most important of which is Cam Ranh Bay [56].

The Soviet presence in Vietnam not only demonstrates support for Hanoi in its continuing confrontation with Beijing, but also constitutes

the southern anchor in a virtual military encirclement of China.\* Some 20 to 25 Soviet warships are now stationed in the South China Sea, including cruise missile submarines, major and minor surface combatants, and assorted auxiliaries including, intelligence collectors. A submarine tender stationed at Cam Ranh Bay has allowed the Soviets to double their submarine days at sea. They have also constructed a pier and shelter for nuclear submarines, underground fuel storage tanks, navigation aids, and an electronic monitoring station. Naval long-range Bear "D" reconnaissance and Bear "F" ASW aircraft operating out of Cam Ranh Bay give the Soviets the ability to cover the entire Chinese coastline, island possessions and claims. Even more ominously, about nine strike, tanker, and electronic combat versions of the TU-16 bomber have deployed to Cam Ranh Bay [57].

Moscow has also begun to beef up the Vietnamese Navy. Since delivering two Petya-class frigates to Vietnam in late 1978, the Soviets have also provided eight Osa-class and three Komar-class fast missile attack craft, eight to ten Shershen-class torpedo boats, and a squadron of ten Ka-25 Hormone antisubmarine helicopters. Much of the Vietnamese Navy is concentrated at Da Nang, where joint antisubmarine warfare exercises are conducted with the Soviet Navy. These exercises are no doubt aimed at improving the Vietnamese (and Soviet) ability to cope with the Chinese submarine threat in the South China Sea. Moreover, the Soviets and the Vietnamese recently practiced joint amphibious exercises in the vicinity of Cam Ranh Bay and Haiphong. In one exercise, some 500 to 1,000 Soviet "marines" reportedly waded ashore near Haiphong supported by eight Soviet warships, including Minsk, Ivan Rogov, and an assortment of Vietnamese vessels [58].

Besides this ongoing presence, the Soviet Navy's "surge" capability in crisis situations has been used by the Kremlin to warn or pressure Beijing without violating Chinese territory or airspace. Although the Ussuri River crisis involved bloody military clashes along the border, the Soviets also used large-scale military exercises accompanied by extensive naval maneuvers to wage psychological warfare against the Chinese. Since then the Soviet Navy's importance in signalling the Chinese in crisis situations has increased as the focus of the rivalry has shifted away from the explosive border region to the periphery. (Even in the Ussuri crisis, Moscow tried to control its military pressure on Beijing geographically by largely shifting the locus of the conflict from the industrial Manchurian area to the underdeveloped Xinjiang region in western China [59]).

In 1978-79, for example, Moscow and Beijing limited their confrontation to Indochina. Moreover, the Kremlin's response to the Chinese invasion of Vietnam was largely a naval one. To warn Beijing to limit

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\* Of course, Soviet military facilities in Indochina also represent a threat to Western and Japanese SLOCs to the Persian Gulf and U.S. military forces in the Philippines.



its incursion, the Soviets deployed approximately 20 surface vessels and some submarines in an arc off the Chinese coast stretching from the Tsushima Straits to the East and South China Seas. (Interestingly, on 25 February 1979, the Minsk carrier task group began its initial deployment to the Pacific when it entered the Mediterranean from the Black Sea. This was just 8 days after the invasion--the exact number of days the Turkish government requires for advance notification of the movement of Soviet warships through the Straits of the Dardanelles. Intentionally or not, this powerful task group, composed of the Kiev-class carrier Minsk, two Kara-class cruisers, the largest Soviet amphibious ship (Ivan Rogov) and an oiler, reminded the Chinese and other observers of Soviet ability to project power in the Pacific.) In the combat area, Soviet naval transports helped ferry troops and supplies from South to North Vietnam. Soviet port visits to Vietnam during the crisis further underlined Moscow's support for Hanoi. Intelligence ships also collected information and presumably passed it on to the Vietnamese. In addition, Soviet naval activities in the vicinity of Hainan and especially the Paracels were probably designed to underscore Chinese vulnerability to Soviet naval capabilities. During the crisis, the Kremlin also conducted naval air reconnaissance from the Soviet coastal area to the South China Sea--including the Paracel Islands. In direct support of the Vietnamese, the Soviets initiated an air and sealoft of military supplies to Vietnam while Soviet transport aircraft helped shuttle troops and supplies within Indochina [60].

Although there were no direct clashes along the border during the crisis, the Soviets accompanied their extensive naval effort with one of the largest military exercises they ever held in the Far East. Even though the exercise was probably preplanned, Moscow no doubt hoped that the significance of Soviet military capabilities would not be lost on the Chinese. Since the exercise apparently involved Soviet naval units deployed in reaction to China's invasion, the Soviets were undoubtedly playing on Chinese fears of encirclement [61].

The Soviet Pacific Fleet then has been a key element in Moscow's efforts to pressure Beijing and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

#### China's Response

The Zhongnanhai has been concerned about Moscow's effort to dominate China's maritime flank and has taken what measures it can in response. As People's Daily put it in 1977:

[The Soviet Union] intensifies expansion of its Pacific Fleet in a frenzied attempt to surround us from the sea.... Failing this kind of serious military provocation and war clamor, we are like opening the door to admit robbers and bringing a

wolf into our house if we do not build a powerful navy and strengthen our coastal defense [62].

Thus, Beijing has tried to improve China's naval capabilities and to counter Soviet attempts to intimidate China.

In a sense, the Sino-Vietnamese Border War marked China's first move in this effort. The Chinese believe that Southeast Asia figures importantly in the Soviet strategy to achieve naval domination and to threaten China from the seas.\* So after Moscow backed Hanoi's invasion of Kampuchea in 1978, the Zhongnanhai openly challenged the Kremlin by invading Vietnam. When Soviet naval units deployed in reaction, the South Sea Fleet signaled Chinese determination by conducting task group exercises during the conflict. (Furthermore, the Chinese used their naval and naval-air capabilities to keep Soviet activities under surveillance.) This was the first time the Chinese had undertaken task group operations. And it marked a move away from a coastal defense strategy embodied in the concept of "guerrilla warfare at sea" to a more assertive strategy called "naval combined arms" [66].

The change had been coming for a long time. The Chinese apparently feared a Soviet naval attack during the Ussuri River crisis of 1969. As a result, the PLAN conducted air and sea exercises near the Bohai Gulf at the height of the crisis. Moreover, the growth of the Soviet Navy in the 1970s spurred the Chinese to reconsider their naval strategy. By the mid-1970s, the Chinese began to change their force structure. The construction of missile patrol boats, primarily associated with the guerrilla warfare strategy, was curtailed. The Chinese stepped up their production of larger surface warships, particularly the Luda-class destroyer, and introduced a new class of frigates, the Jianghu. They also began production of the Daijiang-class multipurpose ocean auxiliary and the Fuqing-class underway replenishment oilers--ships necessary for extended operations. The Zhongnanhai also put more emphasis on the development of nuclear submarines. Professionalism was stressed over politics in the navy. These developments were fought by the radicals in the Chinese leadership. But the fall of the Gang of Four and the second resurrection of Deng Xiaoping in 1977 spurred the transformation of the Chinese Navy [66].

"Naval combined arms" replaced "guerrilla warfare at sea" as the navy's guiding doctrine. Although the Chinese intend to continue traditional coastal defense operations for the time being, they have begun to

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\* During the period of tension leading up to the crisis, the Chinese claimed through the medium of the Hong Kong Communist Press in the summer of 1978 that the "Soviet Union's strategic aim is to make arrangements in Vladivostok, Taiwan, Haiphong, and Cam Ranh Bay for forming an anti-China oceanic arc" [63]. Recently, the Chinese have noted with concern the rapid increase in the Soviet naval and air presence in Vietnam [64].

emphasize the "mobile task force" as the basic unit of naval combat operations. Presumably, "combined arms task groups" will consist of surface, submarine, and shore-based naval air elements--the three combat arms of the navy--with a primary emphasis on the surface force. Since 1979, frequent task group exercises have been conducted throughout the fleet areas. And in 1980, a naval task force sailed to the South Pacific to observe and recover the missile used in China's first ICBM test. The lessons from these operations have been studied closely and have been incorporated into the navy's training programs [67].

As in 1979, these task group operations have also allowed the Chinese at times to counter a Soviet naval presence in the Far East with one of their own. For example, in May 1981, a task group of three destroyers, a supply ship, and a fleet tug "displayed the flag" by sailing from North Fleet to waters off the southern coast of Japan, through the Philippine Sea to the South China Sea and the Tonkin Gulf--finally returning to Qingdao after sailing past Hong Kong and through the Taiwan Strait. Recently, in May 1983, a training squadron consisting of a 20,000-ton supply ship and a 2,000-ton transport vessel took a similar cruise in reverse--sailing from South Fleet waters, past the Spratly Islands, to the Philippine Sea, rounding Iwo Jima, and finally returning to homeport at Zhanjiang after steaming through the East China Sea and the Taiwan Strait [68].

Although other nations no doubt took note, these cruises were largely aimed at Vietnam and Vietnam's Soviet patron. Beijing has extensive island and maritime resource claims in the region at odds with those of U.S. friends and allies [69]. In 1974, China used its navy to seize the Paracel Islands from the South Vietnamese [70]. In 1977, the Chinese stated that they needed a powerful navy not only to counter the Soviet naval threat but also to eventually recover Taiwan, the Spratlys, and other islands they claim [71]. However, the Chinese have been anxious to gain U.S., Japanese, and ASEAN support against the Soviet Union as well as economic and technological aid for China's Four Modernizations [72]. So the likelihood that China would use its navy to assert claims against Western interests is rather low.

This is true even in the case of Taiwan. Tensions in the waters around Taiwan have never been lower as Beijing attempts to woo Taipei into negotiating an agreement for reunification and to assure Washington of China's intention to resolve the dispute peacefully--without actually renouncing the right to use force [73]. Even the naval cruises through the Taiwan Strait were probably as much an expression of displeasure at Soviet warship transits of the waterway as an assertion of sovereignty over Taiwan [74].

Moreover, these voyages, geographically delimited China's defensive perimeter--in a symbolic effort to counter the Soviet naval threat to China's coastal waters. Furthermore, the Zhongnanhai was also using these warship transits to keep up the military and economic pressure on Vietnam--in effect, asserting China's claims to Vietnamese islands in

the Spratlys and to Tonkin Gulf resources also claimed by Hanoi\* [75]. There are reports that China conducted amphibious exercises in the recent past [76]. If so, they may also have been meant to convey a politico-military threat to Hanoi. However, China's actual military capability to seize and retain the distant Spratlys in the face of Soviet and Vietnamese counteraction is rather limited. So these exercises were probably meant to demonstrate China's determination to defend the Paracels--where mainland based aircraft would give the Chinese a fighting chance against a Soviet or Vietnamese attack.\*\*

Hanoi is apparently concerned about the threat China's navy poses to Vietnam. Both Hanoi and Beijing have accused the other of interfering with fishing and merchant vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin and off Hainan Island [80]. The Chinese Navy is also being used to protect offshore oil exploration activities in the South China Sea [81]. The PLAN then could be used to assert China's right to drill in waters also claimed by Hanoi. At the very least, China's naval presence inhibits oil poor Hanoi from exploiting the potential resources of those waters--thereby keeping up China's military, economic, and political pressure on Vietnam.

And China's naval pressure has been felt in Hanoi. Vietnam complains:

In 1981, a force of five warships, including three destroyers, of the North China Sea fleet was sent on a mission as far as the Gulf of Tonkin. This incident was a sign of concern for all of China's neighboring countries because it marked the emergence at sea of Chinese warships. Later, in 1983, China announced that it had dispatched two naval vessels on a 6,000-nautical mile journey to the southernmost point of the Truong Sa archipelago [Spratlys] in the Eastern Sea [82].

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\* The Philippines and Taiwan also hold islands in the Spratlys. Malaysia has occupied a reef in the area. But, for reasons already mentioned, Manila, Kuala Lumpur, and Taipei probably viewed Chinese naval transits in the vicinity with less alarm than the Vietnamese did.

\*\* These amphibious exercises probably were not meant to alarm Taiwan or the U.S.--which still takes an active interest in the peaceful settlement of the dispute between mainland China and Taiwan [77]. Moreover, China's capability to launch an amphibious assault on Taiwan remains limited. Beijing could blockade (or threaten to blockade) Taiwan in order to pressure Taipei to settle their dispute [78]. However, such an action would not only mean abandoning China's policy of improving relations with the West and non-Communist Asian countries but also risk the reinsertion of the U.S. 7th Fleet in the Taiwan Strait--waters the U.S. Navy left in 1969 in a gesture of accommodation to Beijing [79].

So the Vietnamese believe that they must improve their coastal defenses:

Our country's coastline is long. Our territorial seas are large and have a very important position in the political, economic, security, and national defense fields. Our country's sea areas are contiguous with those of China, and the Beijing expansionists and hegemonists are daily and hourly sending armed vessels to encroach on our territorial seas, conduct spying activities, hinder the normal work of our fishermen, and threaten our national security. On the other hand, they are also making intensive preparations for invading our country from the sea in conjunction with their island attacks when conditions permit [83].

As we have seen, Hanoi has been building up its navy with Soviet help. Moreover, the Vietnamese have also conducted joint ASW exercises with the Soviets to deal with the Chinese submarine threat in the South China Sea. (Chinese submarines are also a threat to Soviet merchant shipping as well as Vietnamese shipping in the China seas.) Further, Moscow and Hanoi have been conducting amphibious exercises along the Vietnamese coast--to offset Chinese pressure on the Spratly's and to raise a threat to the Paracels. Hanoi is also relying on the Soviet naval and air presence in Vietnam to counter Chinese military and naval pressure in general, and China is relying on the U.S.

### SECTION 3

#### THE U.S. NAVAL FACTOR

The Chinese have based their security considerations on a strong NATO alliance and a powerful U.S. presence in the Pacific. Ever since the Nixon administration supported China in the Ussuri crisis in 1969, Beijing has looked to Washington to counter Soviet power [84]. The Chinese have expressed their support for NATO and the U.S.-Japanese security treaty. They have also approved U.S. support for ASEAN as a check on Vietnamese expansionism. The Zhongnanhai's support for these various security arrangements is based on sound strategic principle: as long as the "polar bear" is preoccupied with the U.S. and its allies, the Soviets cannot concentrate their attention on China. Not long before China's invasion of Vietnam in 1979, Chinese military leaders told a group of Japanese reporters that "there are some factors which make it difficult for the Soviet Union to wage war against China. First, the Soviet Union needs to obtain an assurance of security from the West. Second, it will find it necessary to conduct a large-scale military mobilization because a million men (in the border area) will not be sufficient in a war with China" [85].

So it is not surprising that Beijing sees the Soviet naval threat in a wider strategic context. As the Chinese Communist party journal, Hongqi (Red Flag) puts it:

[The geographical situation of the USSR] makes it imperative for the Soviet hegemonists to establish for themselves a "bow-shaped navigation line" in the east that links the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, the Southwest Pacific, the Sea of Japan, and the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, if the Soviet Navy wants to enter the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean to scramble for supremacy with the United States. The establishment and control of this navigation line will not only link their Black Sea Fleet with their Pacific Fleet and enable them to support one another, but will also enable the Soviet hegemonists to close up the channel through which the U.S. Pacific fleet enters the Indian Ocean, reduce the strength of the United States in the Far East and threaten China from the seas [86].

The growth of the Soviet Navy weakens the NATO alliance by reducing the (real or perceived) ability of the U.S. Navy to counter Soviet activities in the Mideast and Persian Gulf, thereby threatening the flow of oil to Europe and Japan. It also reduces the relative strength of U.S. forces in the Pacific and their potential ability to aid China in a crisis. If the Soviets can dominate (or appear to dominate), the

"bow-shaped navigation line," the U.S. will be pushed out of Europe and the Far East as the Europeans and Japanese scramble to make amends with the Soviet Union. The U.S. will no longer pose a threat to the Soviet Union in a Sino-Soviet confrontation or war. China would be alone, isolated--vulnerable to Soviet attack or intimidation.

That the U.S. naval and military presence in the Asian region figures strongly in Chinese calculation can be illustrated by a few examples.

- During the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, the U.S. sent a carrier task group to the Indian Ocean to discourage New Delhi from attacking West Pakistan after its victory in the East. According to Henry Kissinger, Zhou Enlai later claimed that the U.S. had "saved" Pakistan [87].
- As the dispute between Beijing and Hanoi over Kampuchea became more heated in the spring of 1978, Moscow conducted naval exercises near China in a show of support for Vietnam. In riposte, the Chinese improved their naval posture in the South China Sea and turned a chance visit to Hong Kong by the Enterprise into a show of U.S. support. Representatives of the New China News Agency visited the carrier while in port--an unprecedented event. The Soviet and Vietnamese media denounced the incident as evidence of American and Chinese collusion [88].
- During China's invasion of Vietnam in early 1979, the U.S. deployed the Constellation carrier task group to the South China Sea. A TASS report complained: "It is not hard to guess in whose support this showing of the U.S. flag is being carried out." Indeed, the Chinese may also have played further on Soviet sensitivity in this regard. The Hong Kong Communist press claimed approvingly that American SAC reconnaissance planes, C-135s, overflew Hong Kong on a surveillance mission of Soviet ships near the Paracels [89].
- The day after the Chinese announced their withdrawal from Vietnam, the Carter administration announced that the Constellation was being deployed to the Indian Ocean in response to the Soviet supported invasion of North Yemen by South Yemen. The Chinese noted the development approvingly; the Soviets condemned it and linked it with U.S. collusion with China in the Indochina crisis. (Perhaps to counter the Constellation and Midway deployments to the Arabian Sea, the Minsk showed the flag in the Gulf of Aden in May 1979 before proceeding to the Pacific in June [90].)
- Whenever Vietnam seriously encroaches on Thailand's territory in its anti-guerrilla offensives in Kampuchea, a kind

kind of Kabuki drama is played out among China, the U.S., and the Soviet Union. In events similar to those in June 1980, Hanoi violated Thai territory and airspace in its spring offensive in 1983. The Chinese responded by shelling Vietnamese territory bordering China while the U.S. supported Bangkok's security, quickened arms deliveries, and announced joint U.S.-Thai military exercises. The Soviet Union expressed its support for Vietnam by deploying the Minsk to the region--but timed the deployment so as not to be associated with the violation of Thailand's sovereignty. (In 1983, the Minsk deployment occurred before the Vietnamese offensive. In 1980, it came some time afterwards.) Moreover, the Chinese charged that the Soviets had been supplying military equipment for the offensive since October 1982 [91].

So the Chinese take a keen interest in U.S. efforts to counter Soviet military strength in the Pacific. Recently, the Chinese press noted approvingly U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger's support for a "strong, secure, and independent China" and his call for "greater Japanese self defense efforts" [92]. Beijing also paid close attention to the press conference held in Bangkok by the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Pacific Command in December 1983.

Admiral Crowe said at the close of a four-day visit to Thailand that in the 1970's the Soviet Union had 20 troop divisions along the Chinese border, but that now it has 50 divisions there.... "One third of the Soviet submarine fleet and one fourth of its land bases are in the Far East and Southeast Asia. Its naval capability has been considerably enhanced by the use of Vietnam's Cam Ranh Bay," he added.

He noted that what the Soviet Union has done in [the Far East and Southeast Asia] has aroused much concern in the Western world. "It is necessary to deter Soviet aggression in this part of the world. In the past three years we have seen continued improvement of our strength and modernization of the naval and air forces in these regions," he said [93].

The Chinese have credited the Reagan administration for increasing U.S. military strength in the Pacific:

...the Reagan administration has reinforced the U.S. Seventh Fleet with 15 Los Angeles type submarines, equipped the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier "Carl Vinson" and the refurbished battleship the "New Jersey," has plans to increase the numbers of ships of the Seventh Fleet to 100 from the



current 80, and is preparing to equip their submarines and ships with guided cruise missiles which can carry nuclear warheads. Meanwhile, the United States has stepped up the renewal of its air force in the Asian-Pacific region, equipping 72 new-type F-15 and 3 early warning aircraft on the Kadena Air Force base at Okinawa, and substituting F-16s for F-4s on some bases in South Korea. It is also planning to deploy two squadrons of F-16s on the Misawa Base of Aomori, Japan. In addition, in recent years there has been an obvious increase in the number of U.S. troops stationed in this region. The "coming back to Asia" of U.S. military strength is to a certain extent a change in U.S. policy concerning the Asian-Pacific region that has attracted attention [94].

The Zhongnanhai is no doubt relieved at Washington's efforts to reverse the decline of its military strength in the region. As one official put it during President Reagan's trip: "There was no question in the private meetings about the Chinese concern for what the Soviets are doing...and they did not object in anyway to our arms buildup" [95].

Indeed, the Chinese seem to have associated the U.S. with China's coastal defense. To protect their oil rigs from attack, the Chinese withdrew them from the Gulf of Tonkin during the Sino-Vietnamese Border War [96]. Since then, Western oil companies, including U.S. ones, have become involved in China's considerable effort to develop its offshore oil reserves [97]. As a result, many Westerners, including Americans, may eventually become involved in developing China's coastal reserves [98]. This will give the U.S. a considerable stake in China's coastal defense. Indeed, China and the U.S. have already begun to tacitly cooperate in overseeing the welfare of the offshore rigs. A severe storm, in the fall of 1983, sank the Glomar Java Sea oil drilling ship in the South China Sea [99]. Chinese naval vessels cooperated with U.S. air patrols in the search for survivors [100].\*

Furthermore, Beijing is still looking to the West, and the U.S. in particular, for the technology and technical expertise to strengthen China's economy and military capabilities. It was, after all, Defense Secretary Weinberger's visit to Beijing in September 1983 and the U.S. agreement to loosen controls on technology with military applications that broke the ice in Sino-U.S. relations [102]. Moreover, the Chinese

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\* Curiously, in a gesture perhaps aimed at both the U.S. and China, Vietnamese naval vessels also participated in the rescue mission [101]. Whatever Hanoi's motives in doing so, Vietnam's participation represented tacit recognition of the political and military importance of Western involvement in China's offshore drilling efforts.

continue to flirt with the idea of purchasing some U.S. arms. They are hesitant though because they lack sufficient foreign exchange for large arms purchases and because they fear becoming dependent on the U.S. for military equipment. Even so, the Chinese remain enamored with the idea. For example, Premier Zhao Ziyang said in January 1984:

If the United States is willing to sell to China some weapons which we need and can afford, then we will purchase them. But specific items are now still being discussed [103].

A recent report claimed that a delegation led by Zhang Pin, the son of China's defense minister Zhang Aiping, visited Washington to pave the way for closer Sino-American military ties and Chinese arms purchases [104]. And during President Reagan's trip to China, it was announced that Zhang Aiping himself would visit the U.S. in June. Moreover, Beijing indicated its interest in U.S. aid for the PLAN when Xinhua cited Secretary Weinberger's comments during his visit to the Chinese naval base at Shanghai:

Upon arriving from Xian earlier today, Weinberger drove to a base of the Chinese Navy along the Yangtze River. Accompanied by local naval officers he inspected two surface vessels, including a 3,000-ton class destroyer equipped with guided-missiles. He also went in the cabin of a submarine to see its interior.

Weinberger told his Chinese hosts that the naval men did very well in keeping the vessels in good shape. He expressed the hope that the discussions in Beijing on military exchanges would continue so that good results would be brought about to benefit the modernization of both Chinese and U.S. navies [105].

The Chinese then are tacitly looking to the U.S. and its navy to counter Soviet strength in the Pacific.

### Conclusion

The Sino-Soviet rivalry, viewed through a maritime prism, seems intractable. Indeed, both China and the Soviet Union have used their navies to indicate as much. During their renewed discussions with Moscow in October 1982, the Chinese signaled that they had not gone soft on the Soviets by successfully testing their first submarine launched ballistic missile [106]--a development of considerable concern to the Kremlin [107]. The Soviets, in turn, demonstrated their support for Vietnam by deploying the Minsk to the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean from roughly October 1982 to February 1983--the period between the first and second sessions of the talks [108]. Furthermore, the Chinese

## CNA PROFESSIONAL PAPERS<sup>1</sup>

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**PP 418**

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1. CNA Professional Papers with an AD number may be obtained from the National Technical Information Service, U.S. Department of Commerce, Springfield, Virginia 22151. Other papers are available from the Management Information Office, Center for Naval Analyses, 2000 North Beauregard Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22311. An index of selected publications is also available on request. The index includes a listing of professional papers, with abstracts, issued from 1969 to December 1983).

2. Listings for Professional Papers issued prior to PP 407 can be found in *Index of Selected Publications (Through December 1983)*, March 1984.

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- [112] Beijing, Xinhua, 27 Mar 1984, FBIS: China, 27 Mar 1984, C1; Moscow, TASS, 26 Mar 1984, FBIS: USSR, 27 Mar 1984, B1. For increased level in Sino-Soviet trade and contacts, see Tokyo, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 23 Mar 1984, 7; Washington Post, 27 Mar 1984, A14. However, in talks with Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping said: "I do not think that the new Chernenko government in the Soviet Union will change its policies. I do not know Mr. Chernenko personally; however, the Soviet side has changed nothing in the Sino-Soviet normalization negotiations. Concerning China's assertions that the 'three obstacles' (the Afghan problem, the Kampuchean issue, and the question of Sino-Soviet borders, including Mongolia) should be removed, the Soviet side only repeats that 'it cannot harm the interests of third countries.' In view of this attitude, it is unlikely that the new Soviet government will change its positions.... The Soviet buildup of its naval, air, and other military capabilities in Asia is a matter of common concern for Japan and China. This problem is a sore issue in the Sino-Soviet talks." Tokyo, Asahi Shimbun, 26 Mar 1984, 2. Moreover, just before the Sino-Soviet talks concluded, Pravda noted that military cooperation between the U.S. and China would be discussed during President Reagan's trip to China; Moscow, Pravda, 24 Mar 1984, FBIS: USSR, 27 Mar 1984, B1

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military situation in the Pacific Basin. In fact, the Chinese apparently feel they can adopt this pious stance precisely because the U.S. has improved its military situation in the Pacific vis-a-vis the Soviets. For example, in 1980 Deng Xiaoping claimed that "the Soviet Union has strengthened its Pacific Fleet so that it now equals the U.S. Pacific Fleet in strength." Tokyo, Yomiuri Shimbun, 30 Mar 1980, 3. The Shijie Zhishi article, however, claims: "The advantages of the Navy and Air Force in the Asian-Pacific region, which the United States has all along possessed, have been greatly weakened since the mid-1970s as a result of the arms expansion of the Soviet Union." Now the U.S. is credited with the military advantage in the Pacific, although weakened by the Soviet military buildup. Thus, the Chinese feel somewhat better about the U.S. military position, and feel they can adopt a somewhat more independent rhetorical stance now than in 1980. But this should not obscure the fact that the Chinese are relying on U.S. military strength to support China against the Soviet Union. Indeed, as one official pointed out during President Reagan's trip: The Chinese "did not object in any way to our [U.S.] arms buildup." Washington Post, 2 May 1984, 189

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- [92] Beijing, Xinhua, 14 Dec 1983, FBIS: China, 14 Dec 1983, B1
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- [94] Beijing, Shijie Zhishi, 1 Dec 1983, FBIS: China, 30 Dec 1983, B4-B6. The article then piously concludes that U.S. policy "...will inevitably aggravate the tense situation in the Asian-Pacific region and bring new threats to world peace." This seems to be merely a rhetorical obeisance to China's independent foreign policy between the two superpowers rather than a reflection of disapproval regarding U.S. policy. Indeed, the concluding paragraph contradicts the entire tenor of the article, i.e., the U.S. buildup is in reaction to Soviet efforts to improve its

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- [10] As one U.S. official put it during Reagan's trip: "There was no question in the private meetings about the Chinese concern for what the Soviets are doing in Afganistan, and they did not object in any way to our arms buildup. It's the reality of the Soviets that made dealing with the Chinese possible." Washington Post, 2 May 1984, A9. The Chinese not only declared that President Reagan's visit constituted a significant step forward in Sino-U.S. ties but also that both the U.S. and China demanded that the Soviets withdraw from Afghanistan and the Vietnamese from Kampuchea, Beijing, Xinhua, 1 May 1984, FBIS: China, 1 May 1984, B7-B8. For the Archipov postponement, see New York Times, 10 May 1984, A8.
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## GLOSSARY

Brezhnev Doctrine - The Soviets claim the right to intervene in Socialist countries when their Socialist character is threatened. The doctrine was first enunciated by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to justify Moscow's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Four Modernizations - China's development program to boost agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defense.

Gang of Four - Mao's wife Jiang Qing and three other radicals prominent in China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1969) were purged after Mao's death in 1976. They are now blamed for virtually all of China's problems.

Green Standard - After the Manchu's conquered the Ming dynasty, they organized China's military along two lines. The Banner armies composed of Manchus formed the main forces and the Army of the Green Standard composed of Chinese constituted the provincial or local forces.

Mandate of Heaven - As the Son of Heaven, it was the emperor's task to lead a life of virtue and perform certain rituals to maintain harmony between heaven and earth. If wars, natural disasters, or the like, disturbed that harmony, the emperor was thought to have lost the "mandate of heaven" and was overthrown.

Military Terms -

ASW:	antisubmarine warfare
MD:	Military District (Soviet)
MR:	Military Region (China)
SAM:	surface-to-air missile
SLBM:	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SSBN:	nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine
SSB:	conventionally powered ballistic missile submarine
SLOC:	sealines of communications
SS:	conventionally powered attack submarine
SSN:	nuclear-powered attack submarine
SS-N-2:	Chinese version of the Soviet short-range Styx surface-to-surface missile (SSU)

PRC and PLA - People's Republic of China and the People's Liberation Army are the official names of Communist China and its armed forces.

Qing Dynasty - The Manchus, a semi-nomadic people from Manchuria, founded the Qing dynasty after they overthrew the indigenous Chinese Ming dynasty in 1644. The Qing dynasty, in turn, then lost the "mandate of heaven" in 1911.

Zhongnanhai - The leadership compound in Beijing

met with the Soviets in a third session only after hosting Secretary Weinberger in Beijing [109]. And as we have seen, the Zhongnanhai was careful to hold out the possibility of Sino-U.S. naval cooperation. The Soviets, in riposte, deployed TU-16 bombers to Cam Ranh Bay for the first time in the fall of 1983 [110]. It is interesting to note that Sino-Soviet talks held in March 1984 were preceded by Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit to the U.S. in January and his favorable statement regarding Chinese purchases of U.S. arms. On the other hand, the Soviets deployed an additional Kiev-class carrier, Novorossiysk, to the Pacific in February [111]. Although some progress was made in nonpolitical areas such as trade and contacts in the Moscow meeting, the Chinese made little headway with the Soviets concerning the Sino-Soviet border, Afghanistan and Kampuchea [112]. Moreover, Hanoi's April offensive in Kampuchea again encroached on Thai territory provoking Sino-Vietnamese clashes along the northern Vietnamese border and U.S. expressions of support for Bangkok as well as promises of tank and aircraft deliveries to Thailand [113]. And as President Reagan's trip to China approached, Moscow, as we have seen, stepped-up its level of support for Hanoi by conducting joint amphibious exercises with Vietnam near Cam Ranh Bay and Haiphong during the crisis [114]. Furthermore the Soviets deployed TU-16 bombers near the Afghan border to support a major offensive against Afghan guerrillas in the Panjshir Valley [115]. The Chinese, in turn, conducted naval exercises near the Spratlys [116].

The Sino-Soviet talks, then, have changed little of substance. Trade and contacts may increase, military tensions could even decline, but the rivalry will continue. It may even increase as China's growth in economic and military power poses an ever greater threat to the Soviets in Asia. And as Zhao Ziyang points out, both China and the United States are Pacific nations and are responsible for the peace and stability of the region [117].



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